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The All-Russian Fascist Party

Erwin Oberländer

On 30 August 1946 *Pravda* gave prominent place to a report on 'The trial of the leaders of the anti-Soviet white-guard organizations and agents of the Japanese intelligence service Semenov, Rodzaevsky, and others', in which the former leader of the All-Russian Fascist Party (VFP), Konstantin Vladimirovich Rodzaevsky, was condemned to death. This was the final and macabre event in the history of a movement which in the 1930s, encouraged by the successes of Italian fascism and German national-socialism, had entertained serious hopes of becoming successor to the CPSU.

Certainly there were few readers of the Moscow paper who knew anything of that history, and *Pravda* had no intention of enlightening them. The Russian fascist movement had fallen into complete oblivion, yet in any comprehensive study of fascism reference should be made to those Russian emigrés who sought in 'Russian fascism' an alternative to bolshevism; the former they defined as 'a synthesis of the lessons to be drawn from the failure of the White movement, the experience of Italian, German, and Japanese fascism, Russia's glorious past and the present post-revolutionary Russian reality'.[1]

Since we are dealing here with an emigré movement that was scattered over the entire world, it is peculiarly difficult to trace its activities. Only a few issues of the newspapers and periodicals put out by the Russian fascists are still in existence, and they are distributed among a number of different libraries.[2] Given that the source material is so inadequate, the present essay does not claim to be anything more than an initial review of the Russian emigré fascist movement which reached its highest point in the foundation of the All-Russian Fascist Party.

[1] *Natsiya*, 1932, 1, p. 1; 1934, 5, p. 7.

[2] I have been able to consult the issues of *Fashist* (Putnam, Conn.) for 1933–8, copies of *Natsiya* (Shanghai), and *Nash Put* (Harbin).

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The rise of the movement

After the triumph of the Red Army in the Civil War, the Russian emigrés were confronted, in the words of the fascist journal *Natsiya* (1932, No. 1) with the question 'what must happen if the walls of the Russian prison are to fall, if the tri-coloured flag is to wave proudly over the liberated Kremlin, if an end is to be put to the communist destruction of national consolidation, if, in brief, Great Russia is to re-enter the family of nations?'. The answers given to this question differed so widely that the various political groups in the emigration, some of which maintained the traditions of the pre-revolutionary parties while others represented new trends, came into violent conflict with each other. The younger people among them were the first to tire of these internal feuds, and to feel themselves betrayed by their leaders. They began to look for new ideas, around which the emigrés could unite and the Russian people be summoned to active struggle against the Soviet regime.

Among the discontented there were many who were fascinated by Mussolini's success in his struggle against the socialists and communists of Italy. The fascist concept of the corporative state seemed to them a genuine alternative to the proletarian class dictatorship, and so to offer an effective weapon against the Soviet regime. 'The tragic catastrophe of the White movement teaches us how not to fight bolshevism; the experience of Italian fascism teaches us how we have to fight the bolsheviks.'[3] Equally attractive to the emigrés was the 'universal character' of fascism, which was gaining a growing number of adherents, and not only in Italy. They regarded it as a stage in world history 'through which the whole of humanity must inevitably pass'. By joining the 'world fascist movement', they hoped not only to avoid the suffocating narrowness of the emigré circles, but to be in a position to put before the Russian people prospects for the future with which no other emigré group, still less the communists, could compete.

Thus Russian fascism arose in the first place as a reaction against the shortcomings of the older generation, who in the opinion of the fascists neither knew how to fight the bolsheviks nor had any clear picture of Russia's future: 'The old parties have not stood the test of life. The pre-revolutionary aspirations of the intelligentsia have

[3] *Natsiya*, 1932, 4–5, p. 2.

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led Russia and the Russian people to the abyss. The emigré groups are stuck fast in endless quarrels and fruitless attempts to unite. For all those who love Russia not only in words but in deeds, who are prepared to make sacrifices to patriotism and . . . really want to fight, there is only one road – into the ranks of the Russian fascist blackshirts.'[4] It was this kind of thinking which led Russian emigrés to found the Russian fascist movement, which had its chief centres in Manchuria and the United States; in almost all the other countries where there were Russian emigrés, small sections of the movement's adherents were set up.

Russian fascists in Manchuria

The first and largest Russian fascist organization arose in Manchuria.[5] Along the course of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which remained in Russian hands until 1935, there had long been a fairly numerous Russian colony, most of them employed by the railway or engaged in trade. The majority had settled in Manchuria before 1917, and became Soviet citizens while continuing to work in Manchuria. According to Soviet sources they numbered 150,000 in 1932. The revolution added a new group to the Russian colony, estimated by the League of Nations in 1921 to number a further 150,000. The existence side by side of these two groups generated a good deal of tension, not least in the Russian law faculty of Harbin University, where before long a pro-Soviet and an anti-Soviet students group were formed. From the summer of 1925 there existed among the latter a small fascist group, impressed by the successes of the Italian fascists, which called itself the Russian Fascist organization (RFO). It conducted a lively agitation among the students, and in January 1927 brought out the 'Theses of Russian Fascism', obviously inspired by Italian ideas of the corporative state, which are reflected also in the name of the 'Union of the National Syndicate of Russian workers', founded in the same year. This association, whose chief was Professor N. I. Nikiforov, undertook as its first task the 'study of the various political trends of an anti-communist character'; it soon became a fascist organization, established a number of fascist circles along the Railway, and be-

[4] *Natsiya*, 1932, 1, p. 2.

[5] Cf. Peter Balakshin, *Final v Kitae* (2 vols. San Francisco, Paris, New York; 1959), 1, pp. 112–16.

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gan to smuggle propaganda material into the USSR.[6] This brought the Soviet consul in Harbin on to the scene – and the Chinese authorities prohibited any kind of fascist propaganda.

Nevertheless, in May 1931, the first congress of all Russian fascist groups was held, in strict secrecy in Manchuria. It decided to found the Russian Fascist Party (RFP). Major-General Vladimir Dmitrievich Kozmin, no doubt because of his impressive appearance, was elected president.[7] Supreme direction of the party was invested in a central committee; its secretary, and hence in effect leader of the party, was the twenty-four year old Konstantin Rodzaevsky. Born in 1907 of poor parents in Blagoveshchensk, he had fled from the Soviet Union in 1925 and made his way to Harbin, where he joined the young fascist movement. Gifted as organizer and journalist he was to remain its leader until its end in 1945.

This congress also adopted the first party programme. Unfortunately, the writer has been unable to obtain a copy, but it no doubt corresponded in essentials with the ideas advanced by Rodzaevsky in his first article for *Natsiya* (1932, No. 1). He started from the assumption that 'tremendous historical events' were about to occur for dark clouds were moving towards the Soviet Union from the west and the east, while within the country itself the isolation of the rulers from the people was becoming more marked and nationalist trends steadily more powerful. These developments, which he considered favourable for fascism, provoked the question: Can we tell the Russian people what these developments portend, or shall we repeat the mistakes of the Whites by leaving the question unanswered? Rodzaevsky maintained that the RFP, whose motto was 'God, Nation, Labour', had to come out unambiguously for 'solidarism' on the Italian model as the new social order. On the other hand, it would be unwise at that stage to determine the specific legal form of the future state which was to embody that order; what they needed was a platform around which the most varied tendencies, sharing a common hostility to communism and capitalism, could unite. This tactical consideration obviously reflected his

[6] It was claimed (*Fashist*, 1934, 8, p. 7) that 14,000 copies of fascist leaflets were smuggled into the USSR in 1927–8.

[7] Kozmin's role was only representative. He resigned in 1933. Since no successor was appointed, Rodzaevsky took over the formal leadership as well.

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intention of winning as many members of right-wing circles as possible for his party. A Russian fascist, he said, could in no circumstances be a democrat or republican, but he could be a 'monarchist, legitimist, Bonapartist, etc.'. In each of these groups the RFP sought to kindle the hope that in the fascist Russia of the future their form of state would prevail.

But it was not only from the conservatives in the emigration that the RFP hoped for support. From the outset of their struggle against bolshevik Russia, they and their predecessors had looked to Japan, the strongest power in the Far East, as a potential ally. When, in the winter of 1931–2, the Japanese occupied Manchuria (they reached Harbin on 5 February 1932), and in March 1932 proclaimed the independent state of Manchukuo, the RFP, thanks to its pro-Japanese attitude, reached the high point of its existence and became the most influential emigré organization in the Far East.

Its activities were at first unquestionably consistent with Japanese policy, which made no attempt to conceal its anti-Soviet direction. All over Manchuria, and elsewhere in China as well as in Japan, RFP sections were established, some of which also set up fascist organizations for women, students, and young people. From April 1932 *Natsiya*, the theoretical journal of the party, appeared in Shanghai; in Harbin, from 3 September of the same year, its daily paper *Nash Put*. On 5 August 1932 a party school was organized in Harbin, designed to train economists, administrators, and social workers for the fascist Russia of the future.

The new party, which according to Rodzaevsky numbered 4000 members, sought to establish contact with other Russian fascist groups, particularly those in the United States. On 28 October 1933 Rodzaevsky wrote to the leaders there and proposed the amalgamation of their organizations into an All-Russian National Labour Party of the Third Russia.

Russian fascists in the United States

The foundation and structure of the Russian fascist movement in the United States was in essentials the work of its leader Anastasi Anastasievich Vonsiatsky. He was the son of a colonel in the gendarmerie who had been murdered by Polish revolutionaries in 1910. In November 1917, as a junior officer in the Nikolaevsky Cavalry School, he joined the Volunteer Army then being formed

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and fought throughout the Civil War until the Army's evacuation of the Crimea in 1920. As emigré he attached himself to the militant anti-communist Brotherhood of the Russian Truth, for which he provided funds after his marriage to a rich American. In the early thirties he became convinced that the existing political emigré organizations no longer met the requirements of the day, largely because the older generation were unable to show the younger people a promising road to the liberation and transformation of Russia. But he did not differentiate his movement from that of the Whites as sharply as did the Russian fascists in the Far East. He and his party did indeed wish to learn from the mistakes of the Whites, 'who never found real contact with the people', but he was also anxious to establish that Russian fascism was 'the heir of the White movement'. Heroic deeds, such as the legendary march across the ice to Ekaterinodar, in which Vonsiatsky had himself taken part, seemed to him peculiarly well suited to inspire the fascists with militancy.[8] When, in May 1933, impressed by the spectacular Nazi triumph in Germany, he founded the All-Russian Fascist Organization (VFO), he looked on it as the continuation of the White movement. The new party had its headquarters in Putnam (Connecticut), and soon built up an entire network of branch organizations throughout America. In August 1933 the first issue of *Fashist* appeared. It proposed, as Lenin's *Iskra* had done, to establish contact with all Russian 'activist' emigrés, to penetrate Russia as the voice of the 'national revolutionary leadership', and to become the nucleus of the new mass fascist movement.

Vonsiatsky, who quickly became the focus of an extraordinary leader cult, introduced the first issue of his paper with an 'open letter' to the principal party body, the 'Russian Fascist Supreme Staff', in which he set down guiding lines for VFO activities. In contrast to Rodzaevsky and the fascists in Manchuria, who made it their first task to draft a programme, Vonsiatsky rejected any kind of political 'programme-mongering', for this would only bring abstract ideas to the consideration of the Russian reality. He devoted his entire attention to the 'tactical struggle for the liberation

[8] This refers to the march of the anti-revolutionary Volunteers in the winter of 1917–18 towards Ekaterinodar (Krasnodar) in fiercely inclement weather. Stökl calls it 'an act of heroic desperation without political significance'; it became for the fascists a symbol of military heroism.

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of the Russian people'. He wanted to reach the people who, embittered by hunger, by life in the kolkhoz, and by the coercive measures of the government, were rising again and again in sporadic outbreaks of unrest, to encourage their protest with inflammatory battle-cries. He was convinced, above all, that in an archetypal peasant country like Russia, fascism would have to seek support among the peasants, to co-ordinate their resistance to collectivization and transform it into a 'national popular movement' led by the fascists.

With this in mind, Vonsiatsky put forward three principal slogans for fascist propaganda: protection of private property, distribution of kolkhoz and sovkhoz land among the peasants, and freedom of trade in agricultural products. This programme indicates the high importance which Vonsiatsky attached to tactics. What he added by way of fascist theory to these and similar concrete slogans in the course of time consisted in essentials of borrowings from his like-minded comrades in Manchuria. In an interview given to a Belgrade paper at the end of 1933 he admitted that he and his colleagues had chosen the title 'fascist' primarily because it was popular in the Soviet Union as a synonym for every kind of resistance. Since the Soviet rulers branded everything hostile to them as fascist, they were themselves the best propagandists for fascism among the discontented population.[9]

The first goal of the VFO was to create a 'united fascist front' within the emigration; but the attempt to turn the existing political emigré organizations into fascist bodies, and to bring their leaders together as the general staff of the national revolution, was a failure. Vonsiatsky made a trip to Europe in 1933 to meet the leaders of the various emigré groups, but the only agreement reached was one for close cooperation between the VFO, the Russian National-Socialist Movement (RNSD) in Germany, and the League of Young Russians. For the rest, he had to be content with the setting up of VFO sections in various places in North and South America, Europe, and the Near East. In these circumstances it is easy to understand why Vonsiatsky, 'in the name of 2000 VFO members', welcomed Rodzaevsky's proposal to merge their two parties. Early in 1934 he and his colleague I. D. Kunle were sent by the Supreme Council of the VFO to the Far East to negotiate the agreement.

[9] *Fashist*, 1933, 5, p. 15.

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On 24 March 1934 the two men arrived in Tokio, where the plenipotentiaries of the RFP, Rodzaevsky, M.A. Matkovsky, and V. Balykov had come to meet them. The 'White Guard nest in Tokio', as *Pravda* (30 March 1934) called the meeting, reached agreement quickly. Vonsiatsky, who had the clearer conception of what an organization embracing all Russian fascists should be, managed to get his ideas accepted, using as additional enticement the prospect of financial help, of which the RFP was urgently in need. At the first meeting complete 'ideological and psychological' unity was established, in which the theoretical formulations of the RFP leaders found their complement in Vonsiatsky's tactical plans. He proposed the foundation of an All-Russian Fascist Party, whose activities would follow the lines laid down in his 'open letter' of 10 May 1933. The result of the negotiations was set forth in Protokoll No. 1, signed in Yokohama on 3 April 1934. This sealed the amalgamation of the RFP and VFO 'for the purpose of creating a common anti-communist front abroad' whose chief goal it would be to 'take the place of the CPSU'. A central executive committee of eight members was appointed to run the party and its headquarters were for the time being to be Harbin. Vonsiatsky was chairman of the committee and Rodzaevsky general secretary. After a triumphal reception for the '*Vozhd*' in Harbin, culminating on 26 April 1934 in a blackshirt parade and a ceremony in the Russian club, Vonsiatsky wrote jubilantly to his friends in the United States: 'The tactical unity of Russian fascism has been achieved.'[10]

After these successful negotiations, Vonsiatsky on his return journey visited the fascist sections in Shanghai, Cairo, Alexandria, Paris, Berlin, Sofia, and Belgrade, and these, it appears, like the numerous American groups, gave their support to the new party. In August Rodzaevsky, in agreement with Vonsiatsky, opened a new Higher Party School (apparently the one established in 1932 had been stillborn) where a six-months training course was to be given to fascist agitators and organizers. Shortly thereafter, however, the 'tactical unity of Russian fascism', so recently celebrated, faced a test it could not withstand.

[10] Ibid., 1934, 11, pp. 2, 10, 14.

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Apart from any personal rivalries, which no doubt existed, and from the distance separating the Harbin and American centres, which virtually excluded the constant contact essential to a party, difficulties arose from the widely differing conditions in which the two groups had to work. While the Russian fascists in the United States enjoyed the liberties of a tolerant democracy which did not in any way encroach on their independence, the Japanese were not inclined to grant the Russian emigrés a freedom of which the use might work to the disadvantage of Japanese interests. Rodzaevsky had to reach an understanding with them, but this was impossible without concessions to the pro-Japanese Ataman Semenov. Semenov, recognized by part of the Russian emigration as the legitimate successor of the 'Supreme Regent' Admiral Kolchak, had maintained contact with the Japanese from the time of the Civil War when he commanded White troops in Siberia. After the conquest of Manchuria, he again worked closely with them, no doubt with a view to combined intervention in the Soviet Union. He deplored the 'extreme enthusiasm of our young people for fascism and for Hitler's national-socialism' and tried to counteract it, which naturally enough made the Russian fascists in the United States highly indignant.

Using the efforts of the Russian fascists in Manchuria to work together with the Japanese and with the Ataman as his point of departure, Vonsiatsky, in an 'open letter' dated 31 December 1934, condemned Rodzaevsky's 'deviations' from the policy agreed on in Yokohama and Harbin. He objected to the terms on which Rodzaevsky had made his peace with Semenov – that 'in the event of war . . . he would be in command of the Russian forces attached to the Japanese army'. Vonsiatsky was convinced that Semenov would only repeat the mistakes made by the Whites, and that the aims he pursued in Russia were incompatible with those of the Russian fascists, and he took the fascists in Harbin to task for having given their party the reputation of an interventionist party. He could not share Rodzaevsky's optimistic view that 'Japan is the only country interested not in the dismemberment of Russia, but in the creation of a great and powerful Russia which would be Japan's friend'.[11] Although the Russian fascists in the United States regarded themselves as 'defeatists' who, if it were to come to

[11] Ibid., 1935, 15, p. 1; *Natsiya*, 1935, 8, p. 50.

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hostilities between the USSR and another power, would wish the Soviet Union to be defeated in order that the war might then turn into Civil war, the cooperation with the Japanese in Manchuria was clearly going too far for them. Vonsiatsky explicitly emphasized that the party's primary goal remained the preparation of the national revolution from within, with the support of the discontented workers and peasants. The national revolutionary struggle, he wrote later, could in no circumstances 'be waged according to the instructions of the government of a foreign power'.[12] He took as his model for the Russian liberation struggle the Spanish Civil War, in which the fascist powers supported Franco without themselves intervening directly or revealing any annexationist intentions.

On the other hand, the *Vozhd* rebuked the general secretary in Harbin for having started 'ferocious anti-semitic propaganda, which could only weaken the national revolutionary struggle against the one chief enemy, Soviet communism'. The argument could hardly have been meant or taken seriously as a pretext for breaking off relations, since Vonsiatsky knew that the RFP leaders, before the amalgamation with the VFO, had waged a vigorous campaign in their paper *Nash Put* against the Jews and Freemasons. This anti-semitism, which in fact harked back to the same phenomenon in pre-revolutionary Russia, but was also influenced by German national-socialism, was one of the most important areas of disagreement between the fascists in the United States and in Manchuria.[13] Vontsiatsky published a pamphlet he had written in 1932, *On Russian Jews*, which opened with the words: 'Among Jews only the red Jew is our enemy. Do not touch the peaceful Jewish inhabitant, his wife and children. We are Christians. We do not shed innocent blood; we do not lament the guilty'[14]

Since peaceful agreement could clearly not be reached, the Russian fascists in the United States set up a new central executive

[12] *Fashist*, 1935, 21, p. 2.

[13] The objects of the campaign, waged from 1933 on, were endorsed by the third congress, which demanded the formation of an 'anti-freemason, anti-Jewish, and anti-communist front'. *Natsiya*, 1935, 6, p. 43, 8, p. 51; *Nash Put*, 1935, No. 78. In later issues of *Fashist* the dictatorship of the CPSU was occasionally equated with the rule of 'a Jewish clique'.

[14] *Brat Russkoi Pravdy*, *O Russkom Evreistve* (1932). The pamphlet was distributed in the United States as giving 'the official attitude of the party on the Jewish question'.

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committee of their own early in 1935 and started a vigorous campaign against Rodzaevsky and the Far East fascists in the pages of *Fashist*. Financial help from the United States having ceased, Rodzaevsky accused Vonsiatsky of indulging a 'personality cult', had him expelled from the party, and in his turn set up a new committee. His actions were explicitly approved at the third party congress, held in the summer of 1935 in Harbin, and he was confirmed as leader of the VFP. This completed the breach between the two wings. In the long run his organization, the larger of the two and the one which retained the party name, seems to have proved more attractive to the sections. From the autumn of 1935 Vonsiatsky's group took the name of the All-Russian National Revolutionary Party, and appears to have had little success thereafter.[15] Rodzaevsky, on the other hand, announced on 22 May 1935, the fourth anniversary of the party's foundation, that it numbered all together 20,000 'activists', organized in 597 local groups, 63 districts, and 29 provincial centres. This, he said, concluded the first stage of the fascist movement, 'the preparation and rallying of forces'. To open the second stage, he announced a three-year plan which was to 'liquidate Jewish rule over the Russian land' and to culminate in the accession of the fascists to power on 1 May 1938.[16] It is not without interest, therefore, to examine their ideas as to the nature of the 'third fascist Russia' which they hoped to build after that date.

Almost all the plans for establishing a fascist regime in Russia derive from Rodzaevsky, who presented a fairly full outline in his book *The Russian National State*.[17] The party programme, briefly summarized in Balakshin's book, gives important indications. The general principles on which the regime was to be based can also be deduced from the articles which appeared in *Natsiya* and from the 'short course for fascists' published in the April-May 1935 issue of *Fashist*.

In the opinion of its Russian advocates, fascism was the outcome of a 'search for new roads, of the aspiration for an alternative and

[15] Vonsiatsky admitted in 1940: 'We were far from taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by the world situation' (*Fashist*, 1940, 57, p. 2). I know nothing of the subsequent fate of the party.

[16] *Natsiya*, 1935, 6, p. 1.

[17] Balakshin, op. cit., 1, pp. 112, 125.

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counter-weight to materialism, to anti-national tendencies, the class struggle, and class rule as exemplified in socialism'. The goal of fascism, which was to replace liberalism and socialism throughout the world, was the 'National Labour State' founded on the religious idea, the national idea, the idea of social justice. The watchword of the third fascist Russia, which would succeed pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia, was 'God, Nation, Labour'.

In interpreting these three principles, the Russian fascists were concerned to preach the opposite of what the Soviets stood for. The Government in Moscow pursued an atheistic policy, and so the fascists advanced the religious idea, for 'a striking example of the importance of religion and of religious education is given by the situation in the USSR, where an active struggle against religion is being waged. The frightful moral licence, the disintegration of the family, the complete spiritual impoverishment of the Russian people – these are the results of the Soviet regime's anti-religious policy.' In contrast, Russian fascism, which its adherents even called 'Christian fascism', wished to re-establish the authority of religion and morals in personal, social, and political life. Its first task would be 'to restore to the Russian people their religion and their Orthodox Church'. Relations between church and state would be regulated by an alliance ruling out intervention by one side in the affairs of the other, but the state would undertake to give the maximum support to the church and to the religious education of the people. How this was to be reconciled with the full religious freedom also proclaimed in the programme, or with the anti-semitism characteristic of the Russian fascists in the Far East, was not elucidated.

The Communist International, 'which is using Russia as the base from which to deploy the forces of world revolution', was betraying the interests of the Russian people. 'The USSR . . . is the state of the Third International, which has settled on the territory of what was once Russia, appropriated the country's wealth, and like a slaveholder rules the Russian people.' Fascism was to combat the communist 'tendency to cosmopolitanism, to national suicide, because Russian fascism like fascism everywhere, is the highest form of nationalism, because it stands for service to the nation, the highest value and the greatest achievement of man'. But if national consciousness, embodied in the slogan 'Russia for

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the Russians', was to triumph over the international class consciousness propagated by the Soviets, the question arose whether the Great Russians alone were capable of this consciousness, or whether the other nationalities embraced in the state could share it. On this all Russian fascists were at one: since one of the most significant characteristics of a nation was a common historical destiny, it was not only the Great Russians 'but all nations inhabiting the territory of the Russian realm who belong to the Russian nation'.

The VFP itself, Rodzaevsky pointed out, embraced members of all nationalities. The fascist Russian state would in any case guarantee that the rights of the nationalities would not be infringed; these peoples could shape their development according to their own ideas. General P. I. Konovalov suggested that as a result of this exemplary policy practically all the neighbouring small states would wish to unite with Russia, for that would be more advantageous to them than their continued precarious existence as small states. 'In Europe, Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, and even Rumania and Bulgaria, and in Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia will voluntarily unite with Russia . . . And Russia will become the leading power in the two continents.'[18]

Russian nationalism, however, was not to prevent the future fascist Russia collaborating with other fascist powers. On the contrary, Rodzaevsky looked forward to an alliance between fascist Russia, Japan, and national-socialist Germany (astonishingly enough completely overlooking Italy, in so many respects his model fascist state). Only such an alliance could 'solve all world problems, establish lasting peace, and break the world domination of the Jews and freemasons'. However, this alliance, or indeed any collaboration with Germany, would be a difficult matter so long as the policy towards Russia outlined in Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was maintained. The attempt to get Hitler to revise these passages obviously failed.[19] When *Fashist* published some relevant excerpts

[18] *Fashist*, 9, p. 9; *Natsiya*, 1934, 5, p. 8; 1935, 6, p. 3; Balakshin, 1, p. 112.

[19] A letter from the head of the Eastern Department of the foreign political office of the NSDAP, Dr Leibbrandt, to Rosenberg, dated 4 September 1936, discusses the possibility of a Russian translation of *Mein Kampf*. The translator made it conditional on 'an introduction by the Führer to the Russian edition withdrawing passages referring to Russia, or explaining that they had now lost

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from Hitler's book, the editors in their introduction praised the statesmanlike wisdom of the author in the years since he had written the book, which would no doubt ensure that he would not forfeit the trust of a great potential ally by ill-considered action against the Russian people. In no circumstances would the Russian fascists tolerate conquest of Russian soil. When the Red Army became the Russian Army, 'woe to him who is not with us'.

Finally, fascist Russia would 'reconcile labour and capital' and cut the ground from under socialism by subordinating class to national interests. The corporative state as conceived by the Italian fascists would provide the basis for the solidarity of all classes and groups in the name of the supreme national interest. After its victory, fascism in Russia would organize all the 'creative forces' of the country along occupational lines. These *natsionalnye soyuzy* of employees and employers within a given occupation would form a national corporation, questions in dispute being decided by a court of arbitration presided over by a government representative. Although the state would maintain constant supervision over the entire economy, the national unions would not only represent the professional interests of their members, but also form the basis of the fascist administrative system. Their elected representatives, together with representatives of the fascist party, would act as the local and central governmental bodies. At the summit of the system there would be an All-Russian *Zemski Sobor*, a kind of estates assembly on the model of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Precisely because these ideas were taken over from Italy, the Russian fascists sought for analogous phenomena in Russian history. Kozmin, president of the RFP, was convinced that 'the activities of the Zemskie Sobory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, representing the organized social groups of those times, were a striking example of the value of the corporative system'. And General A. I. Spiridovich regarded Zubatov as the first Russian fascist and advocate of the idea of the corporative state, employing in 1901–3 the methods later adopted by Mussolini.[20] Both these

their validity. The Führer is said to have expressed willingness to do so. It seems to me desirable to settle this question'. Bundesarchiv Koblenz. NS-Mischbest. 1580 (250-d-18-05/5).

[20] *Natsiya*, 1932, 3, p. 14; 1934, 5, p. 12. In the fascist journals I have been able to consult there is no reference to the 'fascist character' of the pre-revolutionary Russian Right. Cf. H. Rogger, 'Was there a Russian Fascism?' in *Journal of Modern History*, 1964, 4.

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men, however, believed that only a strong central power, standing above classes, could ensure the success of the corporative system, and both thought in terms of a monarchy. But it was on this question of the precise state form of the future Russia that the fascist leaders were unwilling to commit themselves. Rodzaevsky would go no further than to say that there was no question of a republic or a democracy, for these would bring with them 'corruption, class struggle, the battle of parties, and the dictatorship of the plutocracy'.[21] What the leaders continually emphasized was that in order to save Russia there would first have to be a dictatorship of the fascist party. That meant, in the final analysis, that the Russian people, having been the object of a communist experiment, would now become the object of a fascist experiment, and in this sense Russian fascism could hardly be considered an alternative, for the dictatorship of a party could scarcely be reconciled with that 'liberation of the Russian people' which it proclaimed as its goal. The choice would be between an existing dictatorship and a new dictatorship whose consequences none could foretell.

The end of the All-Russian Fascist Party

The aim of seizing power in 1938, and the blueprints for the future fascist Russia, were proclaimed in the middle thirties. This was the high-point of the movement. It is true that in 1937 Rodzaevsky extended the VFP into the Russian Fascist Union (RFS) by establishing relations with one emigré organization in Germany and two in South America; and it is also true that at first collaboration with the Japanese went smoothly. When the latter set up a bureau for Russian emigré affairs in Harbin in 1935 to maintain supervision over their activities, Rodzaevsky and the VFP took a leading part in it. The statement of the chairman of the military department of the VFP, Sergei Dolov at the third party congress in 1935, that his job was to make military cadres out of resolute patriots, was undoubtedly made with Japanese approval. But in the autumn of 1937 difficulties arose, and the Japanese banned the fascist daily *Nash Put*. The party organizations, however, were left undisturbed, and the periodical *Natsiya* became a weekly, published in Harbin.

[21] Because of the strength of the monarchists in the Far East emigration, Rodzaevsky in 1940 declared his readiness to re-establish the monarchy in the event of a fascist victory. The small group which sympathized with Vonsiatsky preferred a fascist dictator. Cf. Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS-Mischbest. vorl. 1589 (250-d-18-10/3).

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With the advance of the German troops in the west in 1940 most of the Russian emigré associations in Europe were dissolved, and Rodzaevsky took the opportunity to declare that now the Russian Fascist Union in Manchukuo was the only independent centre capable of organizing all Russians throughout the world. These hopes were as illusory as those based earlier on the prospect of German-Soviet or Japanese-Soviet hostilities, to which they had for a while clung even after the Soviet-German pact of 1939. In the years 1941–5 the Japanese, with their eye on relations with Russia with whom a non-aggression pact had been concluded in the spring of 1941, steadily reduced the activities of the Russian fascists. The entry of Soviet troops into Manchuria in late summer 1945 brought them to an end. Rodzaevsky at first took refuge in Shanghai, whence he wrote a personal letter to Stalin in which he regretted his past mistakes and expressed the hope of being able to 'spend the rest of his days in enthusiastic work for the fatherland, the party, and the leader' in the Soviet Union.[22] After a long debate with himself whether to heed the enticing promises of the Soviets or the warnings of his friends, he surrendered voluntarily to the Soviet authorities. In Moscow in 1946 he was condemned to death and executed.

It is worthy of note that when the VFP was having its greatest success among the emigrés, in the Soviet Union itself there was a marked turn towards 'Soviet patriotism', although there can scarcely have been any direct connection between the two. But this new Soviet nationalism, which became more and more marked especially during the second world war, nullified the appeal of one of the most important Russian fascist watchwords, the fight against internationalism. Together with the partial rehabilitation of Russian historical traditions and of the Orthodox Church, this Soviet nationalism induced a number of emigrés to return to the USSR after the war. So it was not a wholly opportunistic move on Rodzaevsky's part to write to Stalin in 1945: 'Stalinism is precisely what we mistakenly called Russian fascism, cleansed of all extremes, illusions, and errors.'

[22] Balakshin, 2, pp. 122–35.

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